

sad kids by urdearestmom

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Summary: a series of sad and/or angsty interconnected oneshots.

1. Unresponsive

this was a prompt sent to me on tumblr! the prompt was:

"You make every day worth living."

also i posted this so long ago on ao3 and tumblr but i never posted here so here it finally is!

El loses track of time quickly, all she knows with certainty is that Hopper is behind her defending her as she works to banish the Mind Flayer once and for all. It's been three years since she had to do this the last time, three years since she was able to start as normal a life in Hawkins as possible for someone like her. She hates that it's come to this point again- blames herself for opening the initial gate to the Upside Down in the first place and apparently not closing it properly afterwards- but she'll be damned if she lets anyone else get hurt because of it.

She remembers that Mike is outside in the hallway, having insisted on coming back to the lab with them. He refused to be separated from her again.

("I'm coming with you.")

"Kid, no, it's too dangerous."

"I don't care! You're not separating me from El again. I'm not a kid anymore, you can't tell me what to do."

"You're sixteen!"

"I DON'T CARE!")

She isn't worrying about him too much, though- Hopper and Nancy had taught him to shoot a gun and it turned out to be the one thing he didn't have shitty aim for. Hopper and El had left him with one of Hopper's many weapons to guard the hall while the two of them went down to the gate to finish what had been started a while ago.

When she's finally done, the ever-looming presence of the Mind Flayer completely gone, El kneels on the ground gasping for air and trying to hold on to the last thin threads of her consciousness. She doesn't want to pass out right now, she wants to go find Mike and give him the tightest hug possible because everything is finally *over*-they'll finally get to live happily and peacefully without that constant worry in the back of their minds. Hopper lays a comforting arm over her shoulders and waits a bit with her until she can stand, what feels like fifteen minutes but is actually probably more like half a minute passing. Her head clears and she's almost good as new. Of course she's tired, that's only to be expected, but the overwhelming relief she feels is more than enough to tide her over until she gets home and eats and showers.

It's kind of surprising that Mike hadn't rushed into the room when everything was over, El's sure he would have been able to feel it. He would have *known*. He always knows. That's the first warning sign.

The second one is when El steps back into the hall with her father a minute later and sees no trace of her boyfriend anywhere. "Mike?!" There's no answer, the only sound a faint buzzing coming from the long lights in the ceiling. The noise only makes everything more ominous because Mike wouldn't have just disappeared like that, something happened to him. If the creeping nausea El feels means anything, whatever happened to Mike wasn't good at all. She sees a few shadows on the floor to her right that look like demodogs, kind of, but they're dead.

"MIKE?!" She yells, again getting no response. She turns to Hopper in a blind panic, tears welling up in her eyes. "Dad, where- where is he? He wouldn't have left, where did he go? We need to find him!"

Hopper's looking at the floor further down the hall, his jaw locked and what seems like a mixture of shock and realization in his eyes. El turns to look at what he's seeing and becomes even whiter than she already was. There are streaks of blood on the floor that turn the corner and disappear. "No," she mumbles, "No!"

She takes off in that direction and rounds the corner to see more blood leading to a half-open door that is also covered in bloodstains. She throws it open and the sight in front of her makes her want to

throw up. Instead, she screams, and she knows she's going to have nightmares about this until the day she dies. Mike's coated in blood, but El would recognize his face anywhere. He looks dead and his left arm is missing below the elbow. She's shaking as she walks over to him and collapses beside him wordlessly.

A moment later, Hopper arrives in the room, sucking in a sharp breath and an "Oh, God".

"Is he alive?" He asks, making his way over and bringing out a pocket knife to rip his shirt to shreds.

El's eyes move away from Mike's paler than usual face and lock on his chest. Her vision is so blurry she almost can't make out anything in front of her, but then she sees that his chest is still moving a little bit, meaning that he's still breathing. She starts to cry, deep sobs wracking her body as she tries to get the words out. "Yes," she gasps. "He's breathing!"

Hopper grunts around the shreds of fabric he's holding in his mouth as he rips another. "El," he says, muffled, "I need you to come here and put pressure on his arm about halfway up." She doesn't react for a moment, the words not getting to her. "El!"

He reaches down to tie the rags around what's left of Mike's arm as tight as he can while El presses down on it with all the force her shaking hands can muster. Hopper eyes his handiwork warily before getting up. "Hold that down," he instructs. "I need to look for a windlass."

El watches as her dad rummages through the room and comes up with a broom. "Can you break this?" He asks, holding it in her direction.

"What?" El's panic is probably at the highest it's ever been. She can tell that if they don't get Mike to help soon he's going to die right in front of her and she doesn't know what the broom's for, she has no idea what Hopper is doing. The room is spinning around her and nothing feels like it's real.

"Can you break this? Clean break right about here," Hopper says,

gesturing to a point about a quarter of the way down the handle. In a second it's sitting in his hands in two pieces, broken exactly where he needed it. "Good kid," he adds, kneeling back in his previous position.

He does something El doesn't see properly and the stick is somehow wrapped in the rags. "Should do it for a bit," he says. "Let's go." Hopper lifts Mike's limp form over his shoulder, making sure to watch the wounded arm.

They're in the Blazer racing to the hospital at what El thinks is probably an illegal speed, her choking on her tears and trying not to scream again every time she looks at the still-unconscious Mike in the backseat next to her, when El remembers that she once made Troy piss himself. And if she could do that, then... maybe she can stop the blood flow out of Mike's arm! Whatever Hopper had done had seemed to help, but she wants to do everything she possibly can to extend her boyfriend's chances of living. *Oh my god...* the thought of even *having* to extend his chances of living makes her want to vomit all over again. She ignores it. *Mike's always been there for me when I needed it, now it's my turn.*

El takes a stuttering breath and dredges up from deep within her a last shadow of power, focusing it on Mike's mangled arm. She can't really tell if it makes a difference because all of him is caked in his blood, but she hopes with every fibre of her being that it does. She looks at his face again, down where his head lies on her lap, and feels tears burning her eyes and clogging her throat again. She knows he isn't yet, but Mike looks dead. His hair is matted with blood and his face is painted with it; the skin she can see is white as a sheet. El can't even see his freckles anymore, and that forces another round of wracking sobs out of her chest. What if he never wakes up? She'll never see any part of him anymore, not just his freckles.

Her left hand lands on the side of his face, caressing it softly. "I love you," she chokes. "I love you so much, Mike, you have to be okay. You're gonna be okay, I promise."

She stares at him and decides that she has to kiss him. It might be the last chance she ever gets. She doesn't want it to be but she has no idea what could happen, and it's not like she cares that both of their faces are coloured red. Her nose is dripping now but so are her eyes,

and she leans down as far as she can go to connect their lips. It tastes like metal and salt, the tears falling off her face mixing with the drying blood on his, and she kind of hates it because Mike is unresponsive and cold and it just reminds her of exactly the severity of the situation.

"I love you," El gasps again, squeezing her eyes shut so she doesn't have to look at his face and see that he won't answer. "You can't die, I won't let you. You make every day worth living, do you know that? I can't live without you."

She doesn't say anything else until they get to the hospital, Hopper making up some bullshit cover story about Mike getting attacked by a dog. All she does then is ask a doctor if he's going to be okay. The doctor gives her a pitying look and that's all she needs. She sits down heavily in the nearest empty chair and stares at the lines in the ugly linoleum floor. Her dad eases himself into the seat next to her and pats her back.

"He's gonna be fine, kid, just you wait. The doctors'll take care of him."

El certainly hopes so.

2. You'll Be Okay Too

this is a follow-up to that sad oneshot i posted a few weeks ago since everyone asked for one :) hope you guys enjoy

Beep. Beep. Beep.

The heart monitor is steady, the complete opposite of Nancy's own heartbeat as she sits at Mike's bedside. Hopper had gotten a hold of her as soon as he could and she had taken Joyce's car to the hospital, promising to update the others in the morning so they could get a few hours of sleep before making their way over as well. She'd sat with the Chief and an especially quiet and morose El for a while until a doctor came into the waiting room and announced, "Michael Wheeler?"

The younger girl had immediately jumped up, desperate to see her boyfriend, but the doctor had stopped her with a "Family only, miss." She'd slinked back into her seat and Nancy saw tears in her eyes.

"Hey, El, it'll be fine," she reassured her. "I'll check on him and come back in a bit to talk to you guys, okay?"

The other girl sniffed and nodded meekly. Nancy had looked back at the doctor, waiting expectantly to lead her to her brother, and followed him with her heart in her throat.

She'd stayed with Mike for about ten minutes, not really allowing herself time to think about the gravity of the situation, before going back out to the waiting room to relay his condition to El and Hopper, but the two of them weren't allowed in the room until regular visiting hours started at nine in the morning. It was only four. That led her to her current predicament: sitting in a room alone with her hopefully recovering brother and trying not to cry.

God. Nancy's been told that for now, Mike is stable, but it all depends on whether he makes it through the night or not. She knows the doctors did what they could, and the one who'd spoken to her told her that Hopper's makeshift tourniquet and speedy trip to the hospital

had saved Mike's life. But it only drives home the fact that he could've died tonight. He almost did, if Hopper and El had found him a few minutes after they did it would've been too late. And Nancy also knows that she wasn't the best sister growing up, probably still isn't, but that doesn't mean she doesn't love her little brother. If he'd died she would've never been able to forgive herself for letting him get so involved in this mess.

(Logically, she's aware that nothing she could've done would've stopped him from leaving with El. His heart belongs to her and her only, and everyone knows he'll follow her to the ends of the earth if he has to. But Nancy has to have someone to blame and usually it's herself.)

She doesn't know what she'll say to their parents to explain this. Mike's missing an arm, for god's sake! They don't even know she's come back to town, but she guesses it'll be both a happy and nasty surprise when she calls them later. With that thought, she lays her head on the bed next to where her hand is joined with Mike's and closes her eyes. Nancy hasn't been to church in years and isn't even sure if she believes in the religion she was raised with, but she's going to pray all the prayers she remembers until she can't anymore.

She ends up falling asleep and is awoken a little before six by a jerking motion beside her head and the heart monitor next to the bed going crazy. She snaps her head up to see that Mike is awake, but he looks terrified. His breathing is erratic and so is his heartbeat, going by the monitor. Moments later, a pair of nurses rushes into the room. They both start flitting around him, checking all the machines and trying to restrain him.

Nancy watches in shock as her brother's eyes bulge and his throat works, words struggling to escape. She's never seen him like this. At this point, he's just making guttural noises and attempting to push the nurses away, but he can't do that really well since he hasn't realized he's missing half of one of his arms yet. He sees his sister sitting by the bedside and it's when he registers that it's her that a raspy, "Nancy," rips out of his throat.

She stands suddenly and he immediately relaxes, the nurses pushing him back into the mattress. "We need you to stay calm, Michael," one

of them says. "Can you do that for us?"

Mike looks at her and confusion spreads across his face, as if he's just now noticing that he's in a hospital. "What am I doing here?"

"Michael-"

His head whips back to Nancy. "Where's El?"

Nancy's mouth opens to speak but words don't come out. He's just woken up in a hospital with half an arm gone and his concern is his girlfriend. *Of course it is-*

"Where's El?!" He asks again, voice louder. He's starting to push back against the nurses again, as if he's going to get out of the bed and go searching for El himself. "Where- Nancy, *where is she?!'*"

Nancy doesn't know why she can't answer. Her voice suddenly isn't working. Maybe it's shock at seeing Mike the way he is right now, disoriented, hurt, and angrier than ever. Maybe her vocal cords just decided to stop functioning. But whatever it is, it isn't helping. Mike starts screaming, mostly unintelligible words, but Nancy makes out a few very violent "Let me go!"s before the other nurse sticks a needle in his good arm and Mike goes out again.

Her breath returns to her in a sharp gasp and she walks back toward his bed. She hadn't noticed that she'd stepped away. The first nurse turns to her. "Who's El?"

Nancy stares at her unconscious brother for a moment before looking up at the woman. "His girlfriend," she answers, voice stilted.

The nurse raises her eyebrows. "Is she in the waiting room?"

"Yes." Nancy swallows. "She and her dad are the ones who brought him here. El Hopper," she adds.

"Martha," the nurse says, addressing the other one, "Maybe we should go get her? If he wakes up again and she's not here... I don't want that happening twice, the strain won't be good on him."

Martha nods. "I'll be right back." She exits the room quickly, leaving

Nancy with the other woman.

"I'll be by again in about fifteen minutes to give you a rundown, alright?" She says.

Nancy nods numbly and sits back down in her previous seat. Now that Mike's asleep again, she lets her shock take her over and feels a pricking in her eyes. He woke up, but he could have *not*. And what would she have done then? She pretends she doesn't like him most of the time because that's just how most sibling relationships are, but the truth is that Mike is one of the most important people in her life and a part of her would have died with him.

Moments later, El herself is escorted into the room by Martha and Nancy watches as the teen girl's eyes widen and fill with water, her hands flying up to cover her mouth. She's shaking like a leaf during a storm when she stops on the other side of Mike's bed. Nancy traces the sound through the air when El lets out a loud sob and reaches down to cradle Mike's face in her hands.

"He's okay," she cries. "Oh my god..." Her cheeks are soaked with fresh tears and she leans down to carefully set her head on Mike's chest as if to hear his heartbeat and confirm that he really *is* okay.

Nancy feels numb as she sits and watches the two. She knows the amount of love her brother has for the girl in front of her, and she can see that El returns all of it and then some. It would have been a grievous mistake for the universe to rip them away from each other.

El stays like that for a little while longer before standing and walking to Nancy's side of the bed, where she wraps the older girl in a tight embrace. They clutch each other like the world will end if they let go, seeking an almost unattainable comfort in one another.

El leans away, her face blotchy and wet. "Are you okay?"

Nancy feels even more like she's going to cry. She gives a hiccupy little laugh. "Why are both of you so concerned with everyone but yourselves?"

El gives her a confused look.

"Mike," Nancy starts, "He woke up and the only thing he cared about was where you were. I think he was trying to leave to go find you but the nurses stopped him. He didn't notice that- that his arm's gone!"

El's confusion turns to a muted joy for a moment before returning to her previous sadness. "I never should have let him come."

Nancy reaches up to rub the other girl's shoulder, trying to offer the consolation she cannot give herself. "It's not your fault, you know he would've followed you as soon as you left. There was nothing you could've done."

El sighs and sinks into the end of the bed, hunching over with her face in her hands. "I know you're right, but I just... it could have been so much *worse*, Nancy. You didn't see him when we found him, he was dying! There was blood- everywhere I looked," she chokes out. "I'm going to have nightmares for the rest of my life."

Nancy shakes her head and reaches out for El's hands to grasp. She focuses on the younger's eyes intently. They shine brightly with unshed tears but they hold her gaze, so Nancy finds the words she needs to speak. "We're all going to have nightmares, it's expected with the things we've been through," she says, rubbing her thumbs across El's knuckles like she used to spy Mike doing when his love was stressed. "But we're also all here for you when you need us. Mike might not be in the best shape right now but he will be better, and everyone knows he's never going to leave you. You'll both be there for each other because he needs you just as much as you need him. Do you understand?"

El blinks at her and Nancy listens to their breaths suck in and puff out for a moment before El nods. "He'll get better. We'll be okay."

"You will, El," Nancy says, and somehow the firmness of her statement brings her a slight sense of calm. She's certain now that it'll be okay for her too. "It'll take a while, but one day, you're going to be so happy that you'll forget any of this ever happened, even if it's just for that day."

"Like grief. It never goes away, you just learn to deal with it and kind of forget it, right?" El asks, now having let go of one of Nancy's hands

and wiped her nose on her sleeve.

Nancy grips her other hand tightly, looking away and feeling the lump rise in her throat again. "Exactly."

El squeezes back. "You'll be okay too, Nancy."

Nancy offers a weak smile. She'll be okay too.